ENGL 3540: CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LITERATURE—Fall 2016

M/W 5:30-6:45pm, LA 230
Instructor: Dr. John Charles Goshert
Office: CB 410F Hours: W 10:30-12:00 and by appointment
Phone: 863-6288 email: gosherjo@uvu.edu

Course Overview, Objectives, Requirements

This section of Contemporary American Literature connects key texts around issues of history, memory, and mourning. How do Americans experience and understand these themes—as they can be seen not only in terms of period and place, but also in other terms, including ethnicity, gender, social class, and sexuality? Each novelist is a prominent, although not necessarily dominant, figure in post-1970 American literature; each takes a unique perspective on American history, life, and culture, presenting it through the eyes and experiences of particular ethnic, gender, regional, and class groups. Accompanying each literary text are other short works of fiction and criticism that will broaden and deepen our understanding of literary texts and the course theme.¹

Assignments include periodic response papers and a term project (which will include a significant research component), and—of course—attendance and active participation in class.²

Required Texts—to be purchased


Required Reading—to be printed

obtained through electronic library reserves: http://uvu.edu/library

Eco, Umberto. “Travels in Hyperreality.” Travels in Hyperreality (excerpt)

Reed, Ishmael. “Flight to Canada.” Flight to Canada (excerpt).

Reserve reading (cont.)

Prerequisite Skills
Using reading skills and strategies of argument learned in courses such as Engl. 2600 (Critical Intro to Literature) and 2010 (Intermediate College Writing), students are expected, from the opening of the course, to be prepared to actively, critically read literary texts, and to respond orally and through writing. This course will add to those skills and strategies through lecture, class discussion, and engagement with current critical approaches of responding to literature.

Response Paper Guidelines
2-3 page response papers are due periodically, beginning September 7. While this paper is, primarily, an expression of your opinion, you should nonetheless develop a cogent, well-written argument. The best responses take on a specific topic from lecture, class discussions, presentations (or, of course, from your own reading alone), which is then worked out in some critical/analytic detail. Avoid trying to fit an entire week’s reading—an entire novel or other extended text—into your response, since this leaves you with such a broad scope that any detailed examination is rather difficult.

Avoid summarizing the text and, instead, argue for a particular position, for a particular “reading.” Your treatment of whatever topic you choose will be enhanced not only by a strong thesis, but also by your incorporation of specific material from the texts (both literary and critical); that is, present details, such as dialogue or other citations. This is in keeping with that old adage of “showing” rather than “telling” as you work out your argument/position.

Consider also addressing questions you have about the reading—perhaps centered on a scene, event, character, etc. How do specific questions or parts of the novel/essay/poem inform the significance of the whole? You may also think about developing connections between works—how do formal characteristics, topics, characters, etc. resonate across our focus period, across gender and/or ethnic boundaries? How are those characteristics treated differently and why?

Plan to put your growing critical apparatus into practice. Develop the research and response strategies which will be required for success on your term project. Articulate your agreement or dissent with critical responses we read, or pursue critical readings on your own which will allow you to enter into an informed conversation on literary, cultural, and theoretical concepts.

The final response paper, a narrative self-and-course evaluation, is due with the final project.

Term Project Guidelines
The term project is essentially a research argument—typically a paper of 10-12 pages—on any topic within the scope of the course (American art and culture, 1970 to the present). You may use any of the course texts/authors or develop a project on texts, authors, music, films, art, and so on of personal interest with one caveat: ensure in making your choice that your subject matter merits close examination, and that you can develop a research question and a critical apparatus to explore it. Successful students tend to settle on at least a broad subject and
begin the research and writing process shortly following the midterm. Feel free to write a term paper proposal if you want sustained feedback; this is optional, but due on or before **Monday November 14.**

**Grade Distribution/Policies**

- **Response papers:** 33%
- **Term Project:** 33%
- **Attendance/Participation:** 33%

- Course materials are determined by standards of academic inquiry and a commitment to the exchange of ideas; materials will not be “rated G” or censored in any way.
- If you have any disability that may impair your successfully completing this course, “Students who need accommodations because of a disability may contact the UVU Accessibility Services Department (ASD), located on the Orem Campus in LC 312. To schedule an appointment or to speak with a counselor, call the ASD office at 801-863-8747. Deaf/Hard of Hearing individuals, email nicole.hemmingsen@uvu.edu or text 385-208-2677.” Appropriate Academic Accommodations are granted for all students who have qualified documented disabilities.
- Plagiarism will result in failure of the course and the possibility of administrative action.
- Attendance is required. You should plan to attend and be prepared for each class meeting. Because we will take a discussion/workshop approach to the course, attendance and participation will weigh significantly in your grade. In order to facilitate class participation, **laptop computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices may not be used during class time.**
- All written work will follow MLA style guidelines; late work will not be accepted.
- Per UVU policies: “Each student is expected to take an active role in the learning process by meeting course requirements as specified in written syllabi” (VII.A). Thus, the course syllabus comprises a contract between instructor and students, who will be held to its terms and expectations, for “The right to receive academic credit and/or academic degrees when all specified requirements and course work have been satisfied” (V.I). In other words, the student has the right to receive credit for work that meets or exceeds satisfactory performance; however, the student also has the right to fail based on those same conditions of performance.
- It is not only your right, but also your responsibility to ask questions, to raise challenges, to discuss readings, and to otherwise participate in the class as it unfolds over the semester.
- Students will activate their UVU email accounts, which can be automatically forwarded to any account.
- The course website (http://research.uvu.edu/goshert/uvu354q.pdf) will direct students toward additional resources for research, documentation, and bibliographic conventions. Sample student papers will also be archived, as available, throughout the semester.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS**

Additional readings may be assigned as appropriate

**August**

Mon 22 **Course Introduction**

Wed 24 **Eco (handout)**

*Play it as it Lays 1-33*

Mon 29 **Play 34-135**

Wed 31 **complete Play it as it Lays**

Edington (reserve)
September
Mon 5  No class
Wed 7  Song of Solomon 1-89
                      Response paper #1 due

Mon 12  Song 90-172
Wed 14  Song 173-304

Mon 19  Complete Song of Solomon
   Hooks (reserve)
Wed 21  Awkward (reserve)

Mon 26  White Noise 1-84
                      Response paper #2 due
Wed 28  White 85-189

October
Mon 3  White 190-295
Wed 5  Complete White Noise
   Baudrillard (reserve)

Mon 10  Wilcox (reserve)
   Term project preparation
   Class meets in LI 207
Wed 12  Bone 1-58
                      Response paper #3 due

Mon 17  Bone 59-152
Wed 19  complete Bone
   Chin (reserve)

Mon 24  Wong (reserve)
Wed 26  East Bay Grease 1-55

Mon 31  East 56-150

November
Wed 2  complete East Bay Grease
   London (reserve)
                      Response paper #4 due

Mon 7  Flight 1-65
Wed 9  Flight 66-150

Mon 14  complete Flight
   Nygren (reserve)
Wed 16  Marcuse (reserve)

Mon 21  No class
Wed 23  No class
Mon 28  *The Mere Future* Ch 1-9
Wed 30  *Mere* Ch 10-22

Mon 5  complete *The Mere Future*
Wed 7  Schulman (Reserve)
       **Response paper #5 due**

Mon 12  Exam period:  **Final Project due**
       **Response Paper #6 due**  Deadline: 7:00pm

---

1.Studies significant authors, themes, and topics in American literature (c. 1945 to present) in relation to historical and intellectual developments and contemporary literary theory. Explores multiple genres, including fiction, poetry, drama, and film. Involves lecture, discussions, presentations, written assignments, and exams.

2.Identify aesthetic and theoretical issues associated with contemporary American literature; Write and speak as an informed participant in debates surrounding contemporary American literature; Define key assumptions and concepts associated with contemporary American literature; Examine the contribution of authors from contemporary American literature to literary and cultural history.